

The Story of Dinizulu's Necklace

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In 1888, when a British expedition was sent to Zululand, South Africa, it had to contend with Dinizulu, King of the Zulus - a clever, heavily built man, 6 ft., 7 ins. in height. On state occasions, Dinizulu wore a necklace about 12 feet in length. It consisted of 1,000 or more wood beads, made from a South African yellow wood and strung on a rawhide lace.

The necklace was a distinction conferred on royalty and outstanding warriors. During the hostilities that swept Natal and Zululand in those faraway days, The man who was to become the Founder of the Scout Movement - then Captain Robert Baden-Powell - gained possession of Dinizulu's Necklace.

Many years later, in 1919, when Baden-Powell instituted Wood Badge training for Scoutmasters he remembered Dinizulu's Necklace and taking two of the wooden beads and knotting them on a leather thong, he created the Wood Badge - to be worn around the neck and to be the only proficiency badge worn by Scoutmasters. The Wood Badge, with its replicas of the original Dinizulu beads, is now worn by thousands of men and women around the world.

There are a number of sequels to the story of Dinizulu's Necklace. In 1963 a grandson of Dinizulu, Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi, visited Canada to attend the Anglican World Congress in Toronto and on a side trip to Ottawa was hosted by a member of the Ottawa District staff, DSM. Oliver Belsey. The following Christmas he sent Mr. Belsey a Christmas card depicting his late father doing a Zulu dance, a picture of himself in the full regalia of a Zulu Chieftain and two wooden beads (Wood Badge) taken from the military award of one of Dinizulu's warriors who passed away in 1962.

In 1965 at Kwakhethomthandayo, the Royal Kraal, near Nongoma in Zululand, Scouting history was made with the Investiture of Paramount Chief, Bhekuzulu Nyangayizwe, before 5,000 of his people. The Paramount Chief was invested as a Scout by a South African Headquarter's field commissioner.

To mark the 12th World Jamboree and the 60th Anniversary of Scouting, the Boy Scouts of South Africa decided to make four authentic replicas of Dinizulu's Necklace. After much research and months of hard work by European Rover Scouts in Natal, and Zulu Scouts from Natal troops, the four reproductions of the original were completed.

Three of them were taken to the 12th World Jamboree in Idaho, U.S.A., in August, 1967. For museum purposes, one necklace was presented to the Chief Scout Executive of the host country, Boy Scouts of America; one to the Acting Director of the Boy Scouts World Bureau and one to the Camp Chief, International Training Centre, Gilwell Park, London. The fourth necklace remains in South Africa as an historic memento of the land of the origin of the Wood Badge.